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Representative Dr. Vernon G. Smith

Will you be able to vote?

Due to new state laws, you will be required to have a valid Indiana state picture ID to vote on Primary Election Day—May 2. Please visit my web-site, www.in.gov/H14, to learn more about this law and how to obtain an identification card and rules concerning absentee voting.



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Working for You



Smith Votes NO on Leasing Toll Road



Helping Hoosier Families



Property Tax Relief

2006 Session Report

Major Moves

Smith votes **NO** on leasing Toll Road

More than anything else, the 2006 session of the Indiana General Assembly will be remembered for Major Moves, the governor's program to lease the Indiana Toll Road for \$3.8 billion to a foreign group for the next 75 years.

This proposal became law, despite public opposition at a level I have never seen before. In large numbers, the people of Indiana said they did not want a public asset built with their tax dollars handed over to a foreign corporation, which then will pocket all profits generated by the toll road for 75 years. I heard you and voted **AGAINST** the plan, but our concerns were not enough to change the minds of the majorities in control of the Indiana House and Senate.

Now that Major Moves has become law, what will happen in Indiana?

From now until 2081, when you travel the Indiana Toll Road, your tolls will be sent overseas.

The governor says Indiana will begin work on around 200 road and bridge projects with the \$3.8 billion received from the foreign investors. I believe the lease doesn't provide enough funding to pay for all of the Major Moves projects promised by the governor.

The implications of Major Moves will be felt in Indiana for years to come. If anything, more time was needed to fully analyze the impact of Major Moves. I fear we will be finding out more and more disturbing details about it as time goes on.

Improvements to Education

Education remains one of the most important topics we address at the Indiana General Assembly, and the 2006 session saw several improvements, as much for what we didn't pass as what we did.

During the 2006 session, there was an attempt to move the ISTEP test from the fall to the spring of the school year. This move was opposed by Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed and others who felt the change was too costly and that it would not help in identifying students having problems and providing remediation for them. After much debate, it was decided to make ISTEP reforms the subject of a comprehensive study by the Indiana Department of Education.



New legislation reinstates Indiana's Mentor Teacher Program, which provides professional support to veteran teachers who help in professional development of younger colleagues. Another bill offers high school dropouts the chance to earn their diplomas through the Fast Track program.

We also were able to stop efforts to expand public school vouchers and school choice programs, and I am very pleased that we were able to delay an effort to deregulate public education by eliminating hundreds of state laws on instruction and operation of our schools. Many of us feared this change would have caused funding to be eliminated for programs in such areas as early childhood intervention, summer school, vocational education and substance abuse prevention.



Rep. Smith debates legislation that addressed the right for employers to ban guns from being brought onto business property.

Additional Property Tax Relief

At the start of the 2006 session of the Indiana General Assembly, property tax relief was identified as a priority by members of both parties. When the smoke cleared, we were able to provide some relief for homeowners.

This year, about 1.5 million homeowners will receive a one-time increase in the state homestead credit from 20 to 28 percent. This credit will provide around \$100 million in property tax relief in 2006.

In 2007, the state homestead deduction will increase from \$35,000 to \$45,000 for one year only. This relief will provide an additional \$127 million in relief for homeowners.

Starting in 2008, the state will gradually phase in a cap on property tax bills at two percent of a home's value. This cap would apply to all classes of property in Indiana, starting in 2010.

While this relief is welcome, it still does not make up for the massive increases in local property taxes that were passed on to home and business owners through

the biennial state budget approved in 2005 by the Republicans leading our state's government. At the time, that budget increased the burden on local property taxpayers to the tune of an estimated \$850 million.

And that means you are still going to see your property taxes go up when you get your next tax bill. The time to have enacted true, lasting property tax relief was 2005, but nothing was done by those in charge.



Rep. Smith speaks on a resolution from the House floor.

A summary of new legislation

SCHOOL SAFETY



We have attempted to ensure the safety of schoolchildren and to protect school employees by making possession of a knife on school property or a school bus a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to a 180-day prison term or a fine of \$1,000.

FIREWORKS LAWS



Indiana residents can now launch fireworks on their own property, with certain restrictions. The bill—**WHICH I VOTED AGAINST**—authorizes the discharge of fireworks on personal property or in specially approved fireworks discharge areas and charges a 5 percent public safety fee for the retail sale of fireworks, which will go to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security for training programs for public safety officials.

OBESITY ISSUES

We focused on the legislative side of health concerns by making sure that certain medical records related to obesity procedures are kept confidential and that some advertisers in the food and beverage industry are not liable to claims concerning weight gain and obesity.

CHILD CURFEWS

Long hours of debate over curfew laws in Indiana have finally reached a compromise with new legislation. Children may stay out past curfew if they are carrying a written note from a parent detailing their involvement in a parent-approved activity or event.

HOME IMPROVEMENT FRAUD

The circumstances under which home improvement fraud can now be prosecuted have been expanded. The bill increases the penalties for home improvement fraud if the improvements were made on the property of a senior citizen or if more than two clauses of home improvements laws were violated.

FUNERAL PROTESTS



New legislation increases the penalty for disorderly conduct occurring near the location of a funeral, memorial service, or viewing. The bill is largely in response to a group from Kansas that has chosen to stage protests at the funerals of Hoosier soldiers killed in action, using the occasion to make a political statement.